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ABSTRACT

Research on rural delinquency is far from prolific and tends to focus on non-trend comparisons with the urban sector (see, for example, Clinard, 1942 and Lentz, 1956). The purpose of this paper is to present the results of a trend study of rural delinquents (N=3,347 non-traffic cases) based on the 1965 through 1974 juvenile court records of nine counties in the state of North Dakota. Data analysis focuses upon the types of rural offense patterns as associated with age, sex, community size, and recidivism. Using a social control perspective and the identified empirical patterns, some guarded propositiions about the epidemiology of rural delinquency are suggested as an alternate to the differential opportunity thesis apparently subscribed to by some, e.g., Quinney, 1975. (Author)

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# THE OFFENSE PATTERNS OF RURAL DELINQUENTS: A TEN YEAR ASSESSMENT

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# The Offense Patterns of Rural Delinquents: A Ten Year Assessment*

## I. Introduction

The purposes of this paper are twofold: to present an empirical profile of juvenile delinquency for an eight county region of rural North Dakota, and to suggest some lines of research investigation potentially useful for understanding rural delinquency and the apparent changes in the patterns of "offenses" found in a rural area. While the analysis of deviance, crime and delinquency has long been of interest to the social and behavioral scientist, Marshall Clinard's 1944 observation that "the rural offender has been largely neglected in criminological research" is still accurate (Clinard, 1944:38).

The limited rural criminological research which has been reported to date has tended to consist of rural-urban comparisons (see, for example, Clinard, 1942; Lentz, 1956; and Polk, 1967) as opposed to studies focused on the patterns of variation within the rural sector over time or location. Though the data to be presented here are limited in explanatory ability they do represent a ten year pattern in different size communities and, therefore, is in keeping with Lentz's (1956:339) suggestion that "the wiser course of action appears to be to give closer attention to the rural situation."

## II. Data Sources

The debate among criminologists regarding alternate sources of data has continued from Sellin (1931) to Douglas (1971) to the present day. What has been of concern within this larger criminological issue is equally true of the field of juvenile delinquency. For delinquency it may be said that four sources of information are available to researchers. These are: (1) the

*We would like to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Steve Murdock in completing this paper.

self-report technique employed by Porterfield (1943) and Nye and Short (1957), (2) police records, i.e., individual reports and summary statistics, (3) court records, i.e., individual reports and annual summary statistics, and (4) institutional records.

While the self-report technique has provided some interesting comparative data with official statistics (see Porterfield, 1943), it suffers from the problems of knowledge and recall (see Ennis, 1967) and respondent accuracy (see Gibbons, 1976:24). Furthermore, while researchers may gain a reasonable profile of this phenomenon for a particular time interval, longitudinal analysis is difficult because of the frequent surveying required.

Police records, particularly annual summary reports, normally provide little if any data about the demographic attributes of those labeled as offenders. Original records are of an uneven quality, a feature which is crucial in research concerned with a large geographical region over a long period of time. In rural areas many towns lack a police department but even where a police unit exists, the official records reflect a broad spectrum of bureaucratic management and available record keeping resources.

Institutional records are of limited utility insofar as they are restricted to incarcerated individuals. The growing use of diversion at the juvenile level makes the use of such statistics increasingly troublesome (see Vorenberg and Vorenberg, 1973). In a rural setting, moreover, there is a greater probability that diversion is and has been conducted by unofficial community standards as compared to official "formal programming" in the metropolitan sector.

Similar to other data sources, court records are characterized by respective problems. Individual reports reflect, in part, the processing policy of the criminal justice agencies along with the staff charged with the responsibility of maintaining social order and enforcing the law. Annual summary reports

abbreviate important information about offender and offense characteristics. Finally, while all law enforcement jurisdictions in rural America do not have police departments,* all do have court agencies.

Recognizing (1) that all data sources are characterized by limitations and (2) that our knowledge of rural delinquency is quite thin, it was decided to recognize the methodological prescription of Sellin who has soundly observed:

> ...the value of a crime rate for index purposes decreases as the distance from the crime itself in terms of procedures increases. In other words, police statistics, particularly those of "crimes known to the police," are most likely to furnish a good basis for a crime index (1931:346).

It is our judgement, then, that the research principle in the above recommendation has significant transferability to juvenile court records of a rural region. Stated differently, the juvenile court records in this particular data set are considered to constitute an informative segment of baseline data about this minimally investigated area of sociological import.

The Data Set

The data upon which this analysis is based were collected from one of the district juvenile courts in the State of North Dakota. Covering a time period of 1965 through 1974, data were collected on over 3,300 non-traffic juvenile court processed cases. Of these, the present paper addresses 2,962 cases, the remaining incidents being "neglect," "special proceeding," incomplete information reports, and cases involving youth who did not reside in the study region. With a 1973 population estimate of slightly more than 635,000 people, the data are from one of the more rural states of the nation. While the state is rural, the region included in this court jurisdiction is more rural, i.e.,

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*The use of statistics from a sheriff's department would yield minimal information. Such offices often do not compile annual summary figures and jail register reports only identify those who have been incarcerated on an overnight basis.

1973 population figures estimate 41,526 people to be residing in the eight counties upon which the data are based. Stated another way, the data set is from one of the more rural regions of one of the more rural states.

Before turning attention to the findings and their analyses, it is important to repeat the purpose of the paper, i.e., to present a longitudinal empirical profile of rural delinquency. As such, then, the data presentation and analysis primarily focuses upon trend statistics which describe the proportional patterns of offenses as related to the three central variables of interest--age, sex, and community size. The format employed here is partly modeled after the recent national investigation of adult offenders by Simon (1975). Her data presentation and analytical approach are selected as a benchmark for two central reasons. First, her approach permits interested researchers to focus attention on thepprofile of longitudinal patterns within the specific context of interest. As Lentz (1956:339) pointed out twenty years ago, such a focus is very much needed in studying rural delinquency. Second, the unearthed findings, which are based on original court materials, can serve not only as a preliminary piece of needed information, but, in addition, may also be utilized in the construction of theoretically grounded propositions for future research, i.e., for empirical test and verification. (For an example of the use of official statistics for proposition construction, see Akers, 1973.) Stated differently, these statistics can help to redress an imbalance in criminological knowledge while simultaneously alerting us to specific theoretical and empirical avenues of future investigation.

Recognizing the previously identified qualifications in the use of court statistics and that precautions in data interpretation are very much in order, let us now turn our concern to the longitudinal rural delinquency data set.

## III. The Findings

Before proceeding with the identification of the data, it is useful to review some information about socio-demographic factors for the three variables. Table 1 presents the age distribution (categorized according to the scheme employed by Wattenburg and Saunders, 1954).

Table 1

Age of Youth Processed by Juvenile Court

| Year | 12 & Under N | % | 13 and 14 N | % | 15 and 16 N | % | 17 and older N | % | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1965(N=260) | 23 | 8.84 | 47 | 18.08 | 110 | 42.31 | 80 | 30.77 | 15.32 |
| 1966(N=319) | 28 | 8.78 | 59 | 18.50 | 147 | 46.08 | 85 | 26.64 | 15.18 |
| 1967(N=405) | 30 | 7.41 | 84 | 20.74 | 175 | 43.21 | 116 | 28.64 | 15.52 |
| 1968(N=330) | 35 | 10.36 | 65 | 19.23 | 135 | 39.94 | 103 | 30.74 | 15.08 |
| 1969(N=258) | 20 | 7.75 | 41 | 15.89 | 117 | 45.35 | 80 | 31.01 | 15.30 |
| 1970(N=252) | 15 | 5.95 | 53 | 21.03 | 109 | 43.25 | 74 | 29.37 | 15.32 |
| 1971(N=309) | 31 | 10.03 | 70 | 22.65 | 132 | 42.72 | 76 | 24.60 | 15.05 |
| 1972(N=257) | 29 | 11.28 | 55 | 21.40 | 104 | 40.47 | 69 | 26.85 | 15.05 |
| 1973(N=278) | 35 | 12.59 | 70 | 25.18 | 106 | 38.13 | 67 | 24.10 | 14.88 |
| 1974(N=286) | 42 | 14.68 | 60 | 20.98 | 112 | 39.16 | 72 | 25.18 | 14.73 |

While Table 1 does not establish a continuous steady pattern, we do, nevertheless, notice an increasing proportion of younger offenders, particularly in the two most recent years. In 1973 we find that, for the first time, slightly more than one-fourth (25.18%) of the referred cases involve thirteen and fourteen year old youth. Similarly, the years of 1973 and 1974 are the only two years where youth fourteen years of age or younger constitute better than one-third of the case load (37.77% and 35.66% respectively), a proportion reflected in the mean age for each year. For the first time we see this statistic dipping slightly below the age of fifteen (14.88 in 1973 and 14.73 in 1974). Summarily reviewed, then, Table 1 suggests that, as compared to the final five years of the 1960s, the first five years of the current decade are characterized by an increasing proportion of younger offenders in the court population.

Turning to the variable of sex, we find that, as expected, male referral cases greatly outnumber the female case load. For the entire ten year data set involving 2,961 records where the sex of the subject was known, 2,412 (81.46%) were boys and 549 (18.54%) were girls. Similar proportional distributions have been reported in other investigations, (see, Mattenburg and Saunders, 1954; Cavan and Ferdinand, 1975:217-218; and Gibbons, 1972:172-176). Table 2 presents the data from our study.

Table 2

Distribution of Boy and Girl Juvenile Court Referrals

| Year | Male | | Female | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % |
| 1965 | 206 | 79.23 | 54 | 20.77 |
| 1966 | 249 | 78.06 | 70 | 21.94 |
| 1967 | 319 | 78.77 | 86 | 21.23 |
| 1968 | 291 | 86.10 | 47 | 13.90 |
| 1969 | 222 | 86.05 | 36 | 13.95 |
| 1970 | 214 | 84.92 | 37 | 14.68 |
| 1971 | 251 | 81.23 | 58 | 18.77 |
| 1972 | 192 | 74.71 | 65 | 25.29 |
| 1973 | 221 | 79.50 | 57 | 20.50 |
| 1974 | 247 | 86.36 | 39 | 13.64 |

Table 2 presents us with neither a steady nor an even comparative trend. This may be of importance to the student of female crime and delinquency insofar as Simon, using national arrest statistics for adults, presents data showing a continuing increase (from 1953 through 1972) in the percentage of arrested females (see Simon, 1975:36-37).

Turning attention to the figures for community size, Table 3 indicates that juveniles from the larger size community have not, during the first half of the present decade, been as high a proportion of the case load as they were during the final five years of the 1960's. Table 3 presents these statistics.

Table 3

Proportion of Juvenile Referrals

According to Size of Community

| Year | Under 500 N | % | 500-999 N | % | 1,000-1,499 N | % | 1,500-1,999 N | % | 10,000-24,999 N | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1965 | 33 | 12.69 | 7 | 2.69 | 38 | 14.62 | 44 | 16.92 | 138 | 53.08 |
| 1966 | 38 | 11.91 | 25 | 7.84 | 40 | 12.54 | 34 | 10.66 | 182 | 57.05 |
| 1967 | 42 | 10.37 | 26 | 6.42 | 43 | 10.62 | 39 | 9.63 | 255 | 62.96 |
| 1968 | 57 | 16.86 | 15 | 4.44 | 38 | 11.24 | 31 | 9.17 | 197 | 58.28 |
| 1969 | 41 | 15.89 | 17 | 6.59 | 23 | 8.92 | 35 | 13.57 | 142 | 55.03 |
| 1970 | 56 | 22.22 | 24 | 9.52 | 36 | 14.29 | 40 | 15.87 | 96 | 38.10 |
| 1971 | 67 | 21.68 | 25 | 8.09 | 54 | 17.48 | 47 | 15.21 | 116 | 37.54 |
| 1972 | 66 | 25.68 | 17 | 6.62 | 24 | 9.34 | 33 | 12.84 | 117 | 45.52 |
| 1973 | 51 | 18.34 | 22 | 7.91 | 44 | 15.83 | 19 | 6.84 | 142 | 51.08 |
| 1974 | 47 | 16.34 | 17 | 5.94 | 39 | 13.64 | 50 | 17.48 | 133 | 46.50 |

The most interesting potential barometer to be found in Table 3 involves the proportional distribution of juveniles from towns of less than 2,000 people. At no point from 1965 through 1969 did court referred cases from towns of this size exceed a majority of distribution. In the 1970's, however, cases involving juveniles from communities of less than 2,000 constituted a majority of the case load in four of the five years. In the one year (1973) where such cases were in the minority, the proportion was, nevertheless, substantial, i.e., 40.92%. What these figures specifically reflect awaits further analysis, however.

Offense Patterns

Attention now turns to an analysis of the patterns regarding age, sex, community size and type of offense. It is important to realize that the data comparisons use the two legal categories of "criminal" and "status" offenses. The former category refers to those actions defined as legally punishable regardless of offender's age. Behaviors in this category are:

"Personal Violent" - includes murder, manslaughter, forcible rape, and assault cases;

"Theft Offenses" - includes burglary, auto theft, and larceny (except shoplifting);

"Shoplifting" - restricted to shoplifting;

"Sex Offenses" - includes all sex offenses except forcible rape;

"Drug Offenses" - includes all drug law violations;

"Drunk and Disorderly Offenses" - includes drunk and disorderly conduct. "Status" offenses refer to those actions defined as punishable only if committed by a juvenile. Behaviors in this category are: running away, truancy, curfew violation, ungovernable behavior, and possessing or drinking of liquor. Table 4 presents the comparisons of "criminal" and "status" offenses according to age for the ten year period.

Table 4

Percentage of All Court Referrals for Criminal and Status Offenses in Their Respective Age Cohorts

| | | Criminal | | | | Status | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | N | Under 13 | 13-14 | 15-16 | 17 & older | Under 13 | 13-14 | 15-16 | 17 & older |
| 1965 | 260 | 100.0 | 74.47 | 41.82 | 23.75 | 0.00 | 25.53 | 58.18 | 71.25 |
| 1966 | 319 | 100.0 | 69.49 | 41.50 | 27.06 | 0.00 | 30.51 | 58.50 | 72.94 |
| 1967 | 405 | 96.67 | 60.71 | 35.43 | 31.90 | 3.33 | 39.29 | 64.57 | 68.10 |
| 1968 | 338 | 97.14 | 76.92 | 48.15 | 43.69 | 2.86 | 23.08 | 51.85 | 56.31 |
| 1969 | 250 | 100.0 | 80.49 | 45.30 | 38.75 | 0.00 | 19.51 | 54.70 | 61.25 |
| 1970 | 250 | 100.0 | 86.79 | 65.14 | 53.42 | 0.00 | 13.21 | 34.86 | 46.58 |
| 1971 | 309 | 93.55 | 74.14 | 40.15 | 36.84 | 6.45 | 22.86 | 59.85 | 63.16 |
| 1972 | 257 | 89.66 | 76.36 | 46.15 | 49.28 | 10.34 | 23.64 | 53.85 | 50.72 |
| 1973 | 277 | 94.29 | 81.43 | 48.57 | 43.28 | 5.71 | 18.57 | 51.43 | 56.71 |
| 1974 | 286 | 100.0 | 91.67 | 63.39 | 50.00 | 0.00 | 8.33 | 36.61 | 50.00 |
| Average Percent Change: 1965-1974 | | 0.00 | + 1.91 | +2.40 | +2.36 | 0.00 | -1.91 | -2.40 | -2.36 |
| Average Percent Change: 1965-1969 | | 0.00 | + 1.51 | +0.87 | +2.50 | 0.00 | -1.51 | -0.87 | -2.50 |
| Average Percent Change: 1970-1974 | | 0.00 | + 1.22 | -0.44 | -0.86 | 0.00 | -1.22 | +0.44 | +0.86 |

As can be seen in Table 4, there exists a definite and consistent pattern regarding age and reason for court referral. Reviewed summarily, these figures

indicate that the younger the offender's age, the greater the likelihood of court processing for a non-status offense. Hence, the older the age of the offender, the higher the probability of processing for a "status" offense. While the delinquency literature minimally addresses the age and offense patterns of juveniles (see, for example, Cavan and Ferdinand, 1975 and Gibbons, 1976) our data appear to reflect some trends with the national reviews by Caldwell and Black (1970) and Johnson (1974). Using Uniform Crime Report data, proportional patterns identifying that "the younger the person, the more serious the offense must be to have official recognition of it (1970:43). Thus, it is seen in our data set that an extremely high proportion of those youth thirteen and under were referred for "criminal" offenses. Given the nature of the rural community, i.e., the close interaction between the townspeople and the personnel of the educational and religious institutions, it is more likely for the residents to be able to follow through with more informal social control via non-legal avenues for behaviors such as truancy, ungovernable behavior, running away and drinking of liquor. This informal social control may also explain the proportionally low percentage, i.e., never exceeding fifteen percent (see Table 1) of offenders under the age of thirteen. Regarding rural crime, Clinard (1942:209) observes"...the effects of gossip and other informal controls on the offenders may be a probable explanation for the slight continuity of crime in rural areas."

Turning the focus of attention to the patterns of sex and offense categories, we find, as was anticipated, that generally speaking, males are more likely than females to be processed for "criminal" rather than for "status" offenses. Table 5 presents these results.

The data in Table 5 reveal substantive differences in the patterns of offenses for male and female delinquent court referrals for eight of the ten years, i.e., except for the years 1970 and 1974. Our findings then, are in

Table 5

Percentage of All Court Referrals for Criminal and Status Offenses in Their Respective Sex Cohorts

| Year | N | Criminal | | Status | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| 1965 | 260 | 59.00 | 29.63 | 46.12 | 70.37 |
| 1966 | 319 | 55.42 | 21.43 | 44.58 | 78.57 |
| 1967 | 405 | 49.53 | 24.42 | 50.47 | 75.58 |
| 1968 | 338 | 61.51 | 31.91 | 38.49 | 68.09 |
| 1969 | 258 | 56.31 | 33.33 | 43.69 | 66.67 |
| 1970 | 250 | 68.69 | 67.57 | 31.31 | 32.43 |
| 1971 | 309 | 58.17 | 31.03 | 41.83 | 68.97 |
| 1972 | 257 | 63.54 | 43.08 | 36.46 | 56.92 |
| 1973 | 277 | 69.09 | 31.58 | 30.91 | 68.42 |
| 1974 | 286 | 71.26 | 71.79 | 28.74 | 28.21 |
| Average Percent Change: 1965-1974 | | +1.93 | +4.68 | -1.93 | -4.68 |
| Average Percent Change: 1965-1969 | | +0.61 | +0.93 | -0.61 | -0.93 |
| Average Percent Change: 1970-1974 | | +0.64 | +1.06 | -0.64 | -1.06 |

the expected categories, namely, boys are more likely to be court processed for "criminal" offenses (e.g., assault, burglary, and vandalism) while "status" offense charges (e.g., possessing or drinking of liquor, and ungovernable behavior) are, in the main, more likely to be dominated by girls. Different data sources employed in previously reported investigations have yielded similar patterns. Wattenberg and Saunders (1954:24-31) used police complaint cases along with the Gibbons and Griswold (1957:106-110) investigation of juvenile court referrals show that boys were more likely to be officially processed for "criminal" offenses while girls had a greater likelihood of referral for "status" offenses.

Finally, it is particularly important to note that girls are increasing their official involvement for "criminal" offenses at a greater pace than are the boys, i.e., during each of the five year periods and for the entire time span. These figures are of interest when one considers Simon's (1975)

proposition regarding changing sex roles affecting the amount and type of crime engaged in by adult women. Whether these statistics reflect that "...as women assume new roles and participate more widely in the labor force, they will be exposed to greater opportunities to commit certain types of crimes more usually committed in the past by men" (Simon, 1975:iii) is yet to be researched at the juvenile level. Our findings, nevertheless, reflect a pattern which cannot be dismissed, given the national trend documented by Simon.

Both because of the empirical distributions in Table 4 and in Table 5 along with the previous findings of Wattenburg and Saunders (1954:24-31) on the patterns of age and offense as related to sex, it was decided to compare the age-offense distributions and control for the sexual status of the youth. Table 6 presents our findings.

While cell sizes are too small to warrant comparative statistical analysis, two observations are, nevertheless, important. As was expected, generally speaking, boys constituted a greater proportion of court referrals than did the girls, regardless of the age group. On three occasions, however, this overall pattern failed to hold; i.e., for the thirteen and fourteen year olds in 1967, 1972, and 1973 where we find a majority of referrals for "status" offenses in this age bracket being girls not boys.

This break in the overall pattern then, leads to our second observation, namely, uneven support for the findings of Wattenburg and Saunders exist in our data set. In their comparative analysis of complaints received by the Youth Bureau of the Detroit Police Department in 1952, it was found that "the offense pattern for girls twelve and under was closer to that of boys than at any later age" (Wattenburg and Saunders, 1954:26). While our data contain minimal female referrals to the juvenile court for those twelve and under, the figures for the ten years do indicate, however, that for "status" offenses, the females and males aged thirteen and fourteen are closer than for any of

Table 6

Juvenile Offenses According to Age and Sex: 1965-1974

| Year and Age | Criminal | | | | | Status | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Boys | | Girls | | Total | Boys | | Girls | | Total |
| | N | % | N | % | | N | % | N | % | |
| 1965(N=260) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 13 | 23 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 23 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 |
| 13-14 | 32 | 91.43 | 3 | 8.57 | 35 | 7 | 58.33 | 5 | 41.67 | 12 |
| 15-16 | 36 | 78.26 | 10 | 21.74 | 46 | 45 | 70.31 | 19 | 29.69 | 64 |
| 17 & older | 20 | 86.96 | 3 | 13.04 | 23 | 43 | 75.44 | 14 | 24.56 | 57 |
| Total | 111 | 87.40 | 16 | 12.60 | 127 | 95 | 71.43 | 38 | 28.57 | 133 |
| 1966(N=319) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 13 | 28 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 28 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 |
| 13-14 | 36 | 87.81 | 5 | 12.19 | 41 | 10 | 55.56 | 8 | 44.44 | 18 |
| 15-16 | 54 | 88.52 | 7 | 11.48 | 61 | 53 | 61.63 | 33 | 38.37 | 86 |
| 17 & older | 20 | 86.96 | 3 | 13.04 | 23 | 48 | 77.42 | 14 | 22.58 | 62 |
| Total | 130 | 90.20 | 15 | 9.80 | 153 | 111 | 66.87 | 55 | 33.13 | 166 |
| 1967(N=405) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 13 | 27 | 93.10 | 2 | 6.90 | 29 | 1 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 |
| 13-14 | 47 | 92.16 | 4 | 7.84 | 51 | 16 | 48.48 | 17 | 51.52 | 33 |
| 15-16 | 52 | 83.87 | 10 | 16.13 | 62 | 83 | 73.45 | 30 | 26.55 | 113 |
| 17 & older | 32 | 86.49 | 5 | 13.51 | 37 | 61 | 77.22 | 18 | 22.78 | 79 |
| Total | 158 | 88.27 | 21 | 11.73 | 179 | 161 | 71.24 | 65 | 28.76 | 226 |
| 1968(N=338) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 13 | 34 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 34 | 1 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 |
| 13-14 | 46 | 92.0 | 4 | 8.0 | 50 | 9 | 60.0 | 6 | 40.0 | 15 |
| 15-16 | 59 | 90.77 | 6 | 9.23 | 65 | 59 | 84.29 | 11 | 15.71 | 70 |
| 17 & older | 40 | 88.89 | 5 | 11.11 | 45 | 44 | 75.86 | 14 | 24.14 | 58 |
| Total | 179 | 92.27 | 15 | 7.73 | 194 | 113 | 78.47 | 31 | 21.53 | 144 |
| 1969(N=258) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 13 | 19 | 95.0 | 1 | 5.0 | 20 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 |
| 13-14 | 32 | 96.97 | 1 | 3.03 | 33 | 5 | 62.50 | 3 | 37.50 | 8 |
| 15-16 | 48 | 90.57 | 5 | 9.43 | 53 | 47 | 73.44 | 17 | 26.56 | 64 |
| 17 & older | 26 | 83.87 | 5 | 16.13 | 31 | 45 | 91.84 | 4 | 8.16 | 49 |
| Total | 125 | 91.24 | 12 | 8.76 | 137 | 97 | 80.16 | 24 | 19.84 | 121 |
| 1970(N=251) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 13 | 11 | 73.33 | 4 | 26.67 | 15 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 |
| 13-14 | 38 | 82.61 | 8 | 17.39 | 46 | 6 | 85.71 | 1 | 14.29 | 7 |
| 15-16 | 64 | 90.14 | 7 | 9.86 | 71 | 31 | 81.58 | 7 | 18.42 | 38 |
| 17 & older | 34 | 85.00 | 6 | 15.00 | 40 | 30 | 88.24 | 4 | 11.76 | 34 |
| Total | 147 | 85.46 | 25 | 14.54 | 172 | 67 | 84.81 | 12 | 15.19 | 79 |
| 1971(N=309) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 13 | 27 | 93.10 | 2 | 6.90 | 29 | 2 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 |
| 13-14 | 47 | 87.04 | 7 | 12.96 | 54 | 11 | 68.75 | 5 | 31.25 | 16 |
| 15-16 | 47 | 88.68 | 6 | 11.32 | 53 | 51 | 64.56 | 28 | 35.44 | 79 |
| 17 & older | 25 | 89.29 | 3 | 10.71 | 28 | 41 | 85.42 | 7 | 14.58 | 48 |
| Total | 146 | 89.02 | 18 | 10.98 | 164 | 105 | 72.41 | 40 | 27.59 | 145 |

Table 6 Continued

Juvenile Offenses According to Age

and Sex: 1965-1974

| Year and Age | Criminal | | | | | Status | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Boys | | Girls | | Total | Boys | | Girls | | Total |
| | N | % | N | % | | N | % | N | % | |
| 1972(N=257) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 13 | 22 | 84.62 | 4 | 15.38 | 26 | 2 | 66.77 | 1 | 33.33 | 3 |
| 13-14 | 31 | 73.81 | 11 | 26.19 | 42 | 3 | 23.03 | 10 | 76.92 | 13 |
| 15-16 | 43 | 89.58 | 5 | 10.42 | 48 | 36 | 64.29 | 20 | 35.71 | 56 |
| 17 & older | 26 | 76.47 | 8 | 23.53 | 34 | 29 | 82.86 | 6 | 17.14 | 35 |
| | 122 | 81.33 | 28 | 18.67 | 150 | 70 | 65.42 | 37 | 34.58 | 107 |
| 1973(N=277) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 13 | 31 | 93.94 | 2 | 6.06 | 33 | 2 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 |
| 13-14 | 52 | 91.23 | 5 | 8.77 | 57 | 4 | 30.77 | 9 | 69.23 | 13 |
| 15-16 | 41 | 80.39 | 10 | 19.61 | 51 | 35 | 64.81 | 19 | 35.19 | 54 |
| 17 & older | 28 | 96.55 | 1 | 3.45 | 29 | 27 | 71.05 | 11 | 28.95 | 38 |
| Total | 152 | 89.41 | 18 | 10.59 | 170 | 68 | 63.55 | 39 | 36.45 | 107 |
| 1974(N=286) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 13 | 41 | 97.62 | 1 | 2.38 | 42 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 |
| 13-14 | 44 | 80.00 | 11 | 20.00 | 55 | 3 | 60.00 | 2 | 40.00 | 5 |
| 15-16 | 61 | 85.92 | 10 | 14.08 | 71 | 37 | 90.24 | 4 | 9.76 | 41 |
| 17 & older | 30 | 83.33 | 6 | 16.67 | 36 | 31 | 86.11 | 5 | 13.89 | 36 |
| | 176 | 86.27 | 28 | 17.73 | 204 | 71 | 86.58 | 11 | 13.42 | 82 |

the other age categories. To the extent that Wattenburg and Saunders present data showing greater similarity between boys and girls at younger ages rather than the later years of adolescents, our data show somewhat similar findings.

Our data distribution may reflect Clinard's (1942:212) proposition that the rural offender "...possessed only in an embryonic state the features which criminal social types in areas of extensive urbanization exhibit in their fully developed state." In contrast, then, to the data of Wattenberg and Saunders, the social control existing in the rural community may account for not only the types of crime engaged in by the youth, but, in addition, the age period in which more serious participation in delinquency occurs.

Before focusing upon the trend of the patterns regarding community size and type of offense, it is useful to recall the data from Table 3 where it was pointed out that during the past five years court referrals of youth from

smaller towns have been increasing substantially. Table 7 now presents the data on community size and offense.

Table 7

Percentage of All Court Referrals for Criminal and Status Offenses According to Community Size

| | | Criminal | | Status | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | N. | Under 2,000 | Over 10,000 | Under 2,000 | Over 10,000 |
| 1965 | 260 | 39.34 | 57.25 | 60.66 | 42.75 |
| 1966 | 319 | 45.99 | 49.45 | 54.01 | 50.55 |
| 1967 | 405 | 41.33 | 34.11 | 58.67 | 65.89 |
| 1968 | 338 | 44.68 | 66.50 | 55.32 | 43.50 |
| 1969 | 258 | 42.24 | 61.97 | 57.76 | 38.03 |
| 1970 | 251 | 69.23 | 67.37 | 30.77 | 32.63 |
| 1971 | 309 | 53.37 | 52.99 | 46.63 | 47.01 |
| 1972 | 257 | 42.14 | 77.78 | 57.86 | 22.22 |
| 1973 | 277 | 51.47 | 70.92 | 48.53 | 29.08 |
| 1974 | 286 | 62.75 | 81.20 | 37.25 | 18.80 |
| Average Percent Change: 1965-1974 | | +6.41 | +2.66 | -6.41 | -2.66 |
| Average Percent Change: 1965-1969 | | +0.75 | +1.18 | -0.75 | -1.18 |
| Average Percent Change: 1970-1974 | | -6.48 | +3.46 | +6.48 | -3.46 |

As we anticipated from the preliminary profile of Table 3, the proportion of youth from towns with less than 2,000 people has substantially increased during the five year span of 1970-1974. Of particular interest in Table 7, however, is the average annual change for type of offense and community size. While the ten year trend appears to indicate that juvenile crime in the smaller communities may be increasing more so than in the larger community, the five year segments tend to be more indicative of where this increase is occuring. Youth from the smaller communities (less than 2,000 people) who were processed by the courts have shown a greater increase in "status" offenses during the 1970 through 1974 period than was true of the earlier five year period. "Criminal" referall charges, on the other hand, have appeared more frequently in court statistics for the past five years in the larger community setting.

Thus, while Table 3 suggested a greater degree of growth in referrals from small towns, this, as indicated in Table 7 was summarily misleading. Time and offense specifications, then, indicate a more exact conclusion. Specifically, the yearly average changes from 1970 through 1974 reveal that for communities with less than 2,000 residents, "status" offense referrals increased an average of 6.48% while the "criminal" case load declined. During this same period of time in the community of more than 10,000 residents, "criminal" case referals were increasing while the "status" case size was declining.

## IV. Summary and Conclusion

This paper has presented some basic findings from a ten year (1965-1974) data set of eight rural counties in the state of North Dakota. To briefly reiterate, three central empirical themes have been identified:

1. Regarding age and offense, the data indicate the younger the juvenile the greater the probability of being referred to court for a "criminal" category offense.
2. Concerning sex and offense, while far more boys than girls were processed into juvenile court; a similar proportion of boys and girls aged 13-14 were referred to the court; girls' official involvement for "criminal" offenses is increasing at a faster pace than that of boys.
3. Youth from small towns (less than 2,000 residents) constituted a minority of the court referrals from 1965 through 1969. From 1970 through 1974, however, youth with such a community size background took an increasing share of the caseload, particularly for "status" offenses.

It is our judgement that common to each of these data pieces is a theme of legal and non-legal social control. The specific factors and their inextricably interwoven relationship behind the causation of these patterns

await further investigation. In that the socio-political facts presented in this paper do not speak for themselves, some research ideas may be of interest.

Suggestions for Further Research

Additional analysis of the North Dakota data set on rural delinquency is needed but are beyond the parameters of the present paper. The data analysis perspective employed in this future effort along with whether or not additional comparative data will be useful are matters of considerable importance. Several suggestions for future research, then, are advanced for consideration.

First, it seems to us that one point of evidence suggested by our findings is that the predictive and explanatory mileage which researchers may expect from legal criteria is limited. Turk appears to be sensitive to the multi-dimensional problem of official statistics for scientific prediction and explanation when he states:

> There is here no quarrel with the effort to determine the conditions under which certain forms of behavior occur. The insoluble problem is, rather, that inappropriate data have been used in attempts to generate and verify theoretical propositions (Turk, 1969:8).

Explaining "crime," i.e., behavior against the law solely from official statistics is a hazardous pursuit, one central reason being the meaning of these statistics. Again Turk offers some insight in observing "control of behavior, not knowledge of behavior, is the driving aim of The Law and ethical assumptions, rather than increased knowledge of causation, are the criteria of success" (1969:8).

Thus, one suggestion for future research on delinquency is to categorize the data into a classification scheme which contains more meaning regarding

the potential socio-psychological elements of the act than is found in legal codification. For example, one may wish to consider the classification of legal norms advanced by Turk (1969:80-90). In a similar vein, the well known work of Sellin and Wolfgang (1964) who used the files of the Philadelphia police in constructing a classification scheme of delinquency could be employed as a benchmark for court data. The correlation between their results and rural juvenile court data should prove to be of interest to the many researchers attempting to address the measurement, prediction, and explanation of juvenile delinquency.

"Status" offense behaviors appear to have some socio-psychological meaning related to social control elements. Thus, in a rural context, the meaning of a "status" offense is not merely one of a behavior proscription applied only to juveniles; but, rather, it may imply behavior against the model of social control exerted in rural communities.

Second, the analysis of rural delinquency is, in our judgement, in need of closer examination as to the contextual situation where we find the socialization and thus the social control of rural youth. One implication of this research prescription has been recognized by Lentz (1956:339) in his call for less comparative work on rural-urban differentials. Another implication is to attempt to identify and explain the behavior of youth not defined as delinquent and those who are so labeled, legally or otherwise. Stated another way, the resulting conceptual question is "'Why do men obey the rules of society'? Deviance is taken for granted; conformity must be explained"(Hirschi, 1969:10). Hirschi's well known work, based on a control theory of delinquency provides much potential for research in a rural setting such as the eight county region of North Dakota investigated in this paper. This area of North Dakota will be the scene of numerous energy related development projects. These energy conversion efforts in western North Dakota

will, it seems reasonable to assume, alter not only the topography and climatic ecology, but, in addition, the socio-economic, the socio-political, the socio-psychological, in short the socio-ecological conditions of the region. To the extent that these assumptions are accurate, it seems reasonable to assume further, that the processes and abilities of the social institutions to transmit and maintain traditional rural cultural system will be challenged.[1] Hence, the present situation regarding the attachments, commitments, involvements and beliefs of the adult and youth strata of rural North Dakota may undergo substantive change.[2] The present and resulting interrelationships of these and the bearing upon the social bond and individual motivation will be worthy of careful and continuous investigation.

Our third suggestion, then, is to construct a research design theoretically grounded in a way which addresses conformity as the dependent variable. A triangulation of data sources, e.g., official statistics, self-report data, and perceptions of personnel involved with unofficial and offical social control, may be of greater utility than a data set from only one source.

In conclusion, Lentz's (1956:339) call for closer attention on the rural situation was cogently recognized long ago by E. W. Burgess who observed:

> The main characteristics of small town life stand out in clear perspective: close acquaintanceship of everyone with everyone else, the dominance of personal relations, and the subjection of the individual to continuous observation and control by the community(1932:128).

In our judgement, then, the key research question does not entail an analysis of urban-rural differentials. Rather, analysis should extend to the conformity-nonconformity dimension in its particular contextual environment.

Footnotes

1. It may be of interest ot the reader to have some knowledge of the Juvenile Court of this particular district. The Juvenile Court Commissioner serves also as the Juvenile Supervisor, the Juvenile Referee and the Probation Officer for this eight county region. While the Juvenile Court processes approximately 300 "criminal" and "status" offenders (along with neglect and special proceedings cases) per year, it seems consistent, in our judgement, that the communities in this rural area perceive no need for more than one full-time staff member to deal with these youth. Thus, it appears that while these cases have required official, legal means of social control, the residents of these communities still, nevertheless, rely upon their informal means of social control once legal control has been enacted. More specifically, the legal model of social control exerted by these rural communities is not as "formal" as those models of more urbanized areas.

2. This is not to be construed as a static conception of rural North Dakota. Quite the contrary, we assess this rural region to be experiencing changes somewhat parallel to other sectors of the nation. One change, school consolidation, is a relatively recent development in this area. i.e., during the past ten years. Thus, it would make for an interesting research question to relate official delinquency records with school consolidation patterns. Whether such a modification in this institution has an impact on the attainments, commitments, involvements, and beliefs of rural youth is, then, worthy of examination (see, Hirschi, 1969). Should official records reflect a change which appears to be related to changing school districts, then the researchers can attempt to use these as a guide to the generation of testable propositions. Unlike Turk (1969:8), then, we submit that official statistics have a basic appropriateness for generating research on the behavior question. The theoretical verification of these questions, however, requires additional types of data from alternate information bases.

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